

Hon Julie Anne Genter

Minister for Women

Associate Minister of Transport

Associate Minister of Health

Minita mō ngā Wāhine

Minita Tuarua mō ngā Take Waka

Minita Tuarua mō te Manatū Hauora



17 APR 2019

Ms Paula Tesoriero MNZM
Disability Rights Commissioner
Human Rights Commission
c/o rebeccam@hrc.co.nz

Ref. C190400

Tēnā koe Paula

Thank you for your correspondence of 6 March 2019, regarding the support services for disabled people. I am responding to you as the issues you raise fall within my responsibilities as Associate Minister of Health. I have copied in my ministerial colleagues, Hon Dr David Clark, Minister of Health and Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister of Social Development, for their information.

Thank you for writing and sharing your concerns. I can assure you there have been no decisions to cut disability support services. I am advised that the Ministry of Health is currently reviewing its options and identifying ways to improve financial sustainability while working to ensure disabled New Zealanders are receiving the best support possible, and that the support is being allocated in a consistent and fair manner.

The Government has increased funding for Disability Support Services (DSS) every year for the past five years. The largest increase came through as part of Budget 2018, with an additional \$58 million invested into DSS. Despite this additional investment, the spend for the 2018/19 financial year is predicted to exceed the DSS budget by as much as \$85 million by the end of June 2019.

In the past, the Ministry has shifted funding from elsewhere in the health budget to meet any shortfalls within disability. As you can imagine, this approach is not sustainable. The DSS operating model needs to be reviewed to support its sustainability over the long term.

While the distribution of funding is an operational matter for the Ministry, I have made it clear to the Ministry that my priority is on good outcomes for disabled people and whānau. I also expect the operating model to be in alignment with human rights legislation and Enabling Good Lives principles, supporting disabled New Zealanders to live good lives and enhance their self-determination. For my part, I will continue to advocate for high quality disability support services. I am aware how life changing the right support can be.

As you are aware, the Ministry currently is trialling a new disability support system approach called Mana Whaikaha in the MidCentral region. The trial provides people with disabilities and whānau with greater choice and control around their disability supports, creating opportunities for enhancing self-determination, community participation, and independence. The trial is expected to inform in the development of an improved operating model for disability support services, one that is both equitable and sustainable.

The Health and Disability System Review may also make recommendations that will help to improve long-term sustainability of disability support services for the future. Its interim report is due with the Minister of Health in August 2019, and the final report is due in March 2020.

Thank you again for writing. I look forward to continued engagement with you regarding the rights and wellbeing of New Zealanders with disability.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie Anne Genter'.

Hon Julie Anne Genter
Associate Minister of Health

cc Hon Dr David Clark
Minister of Health

Hon Carmel Sepuloni
Minister of Disability Issues
Minister of Social Development